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Preservice and Inservice English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions of the New Language Education Policy Regarding the Teaching of Classes in English at Japanese Senior High Schools

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6.1 Introduction

To date, Japan has attempted to create national-level standardization so as to consolidate the quality of education. One reason for this is an awareness of “global competitiveness” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 5). Knowledge of science and technology is assumed to promote Japan’s productivity and prosperity and to stabilize its national position in international affairs. Thus, the government, especially after the Second World War, carried out a series of education reforms in order to institutionalize “scientific disciplines after Western models” (Figal, 1999, p. 77). As a result, national conformity in the quality of education has made it possible for Japan to claim excellence in basic education founded on the rigid compulsory education system (see Lucien, 2001).

It cannot be denied, however, that such educational conformity has generated some negative repercussions. For instance, scientific knowledge and mathematical certainty are excessively valued and actively sought in the education system, while humanistic aspects of education are undervalued, particularly in the area of the liberal arts (McCarty, 1995; cf. Toulmin, 1990). Furthermore, since the quality of teachers was for a long time left unquestioned, what the Japanese call *shishitsu* (i.e. the quality of teachers) has recently been called into question. This issue has become a crucial theme in today’s educational debates in Japan (e.g. Grossman, 2004). This fact, among others, clearly indicates

that the top-down approach to education reforms should be replaced with a bottom-up approach (Nagamine, 2008).

The new version of *The Course of Study* (national curriculum guidelines) was announced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in March 2009 (MEXT, 2009). The new version includes measures to improve students' communicative competence in English in Japanese senior high schools. One of the measures is to mandate that senior high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers conduct all classes in English. Chapter 3, provision 4 of the common content for all subjects in the new *Course of Study* states the following:

When taking into consideration the characteristics of each English subject, classes, in principle, should be conducted in English in order to enhance the opportunities for students to be exposed to English, transforming classes into real communication scenes. Consideration should be given to use English in accordance with the students' level of comprehension. (MEXT, 2011)

This new language education policy has been implemented since the 2013 academic year. Even before the enactment, however, it had already generated repercussions among preservice and inservice EFL teachers and teacher educators in Japan (Yamada & Hristoskova, 2011).

Many scholars and researchers alike asserted that the new policy was developed and introduced abruptly by MEXT in a top-down fashion and that it does not reflect the reality facing EFL teachers in local school settings. Glasgow (2012), for instance, highlighted native English-speaking teachers' and Japanese EFL teachers' uncertainty about their roles in implementing the policy, and implied the possibility of an unsuccessful policy implementation. It was also argued that the quality of English education would likely decline as a result of the policy enforcement (cf. Shin, 2012). This argument appears to be based primarily on the presupposition that the use of students' mother tongue or first language in class (i.e. teachers' and students' use of Japanese in Japanese EFL contexts) plays a crucial role in developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP); thus, the new language education policy was criticized as merely forcing teachers to emphasize the development of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) (see Cummins, 1979, 1984).

As Yamada and Hristoskova (2011) mention, MEXT's new language education policy has indeed become the subject of heated debates in the field of English education. What is missing in the nationwide debates,

however, is in-depth, constructive discussions not only on how inservice EFL teachers perceive the new language education policy, but also on how preservice EFL teachers perceive it in teacher education settings. The new language education policy certainly requires EFL teachers to change their beliefs regarding English learning and teaching, as well as their pedagogical approaches and teaching practices. Nevertheless, while the voices of policy makers and academics (people who hold more power) can be heard, the voices of critical stakeholders, such as preservice and inservice EFL teachers (people who hold less power), are rarely heard. In other words, a dialogue in which the critical stakeholders can engage each other is lacking.

This observation is crucial because, as Freire (1993, pp. 92–93) asserts, “[w]ithout dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education.” Another remark by Freire (1993, p. 90) may be pivotal to cite here: “How can I dialogue if I am closed to—and even offended by—the contribution of others? How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness?” It can therefore be argued that the voices of critical stakeholders should receive greater attention, and that these voices need to be taken into consideration and reflected in the process of policy making and implementation (cf. Măță, 2012; Mahboob & Tilakaratna, 2012).

Gorsuch (2000) claims that conditions in schools and classroom settings tend to affect teachers’ perceptions of pedagogical approaches. Unless such context-bound, socioeducational, and often political factors are taken into account, our arguments for and against the new language education policy may ultimately prove fruitless. Or, even worse, English teachers (both preservice and inservice teachers) will most likely end up as the main barrier to educational change (cf. Shin, 2012; Pan & Block, 2011). Therefore, a qualitative case study was designed and conducted to explore and investigate preservice as well as inservice EFL teachers’ perceptions of the new language education policy.

This chapter discusses the major research findings of the study. Primary data were gleaned from multiple sessions of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with four participants: two preservice teachers (one male and one female) and two inservice teachers (one male and one female). The collected data were analyzed employing the grounded theory approach (GTA) (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). In what follows, the research design and its rationales are explained, and the major research findings presented. Based on the research findings, some implications are also proposed for policy makers, administrators, and teacher educators to

develop and implement language education policies successfully in Asian EFL contexts in general and Japanese EFL contexts in particular.

6.2 Research methodology

6.2.1 Qualitative research design and case-study approach

According to Maxwell (1996), five major research purposes typically appear in qualitative research: (a) to understand meaning(s); (b) to understand a particular context; (c) to identify unanticipated phenomena and influences; (d) to understand processes; (e) to develop causal explanations. Considering such purposes and the nature of the present study (i.e. descriptive, particularistic, and heuristic), a qualitative research design was employed. In addition, a case-study approach was applied by regarding “case” as “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there [were] boundaries” (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). The present study aimed to provide an “in-depth insight into complicated situated and social issues” (Mann & Tang, 2012, p. 477) involved in enacting the new language education policy in Japanese EFL contexts.

Since four participants were investigated, the present study may be categorized as a collective case study (Stake, 2005) allowing the researcher to examine “both the uniqueness and similarity” (Mann & Tang, 2012, p. 477) of the participants. This study was a small-scale study that incorporated four cases. Hence the primary goal was not “generalization in a statistical sense” (Merriam, 2001, p. 61) (cf. Maxwell, 2002), but instead, the particularization of observed and interpreted phenomena (cases) was considered the main goal (see Davis, 1995).

6.2.2 Participants

As noted earlier, the participants comprised four EFL teachers; two preservice EFL teachers (one male and one female) and two inservice EFL teachers (one male and one female). All participants were selected in such a way that the researcher could increase the opportunity “to identify emerging themes” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 82) embedded in the context, choose “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 230), and achieve typicality or representativeness of Japanese EFL contexts and EFL teachers (both preservice and inservice teachers). Rather than using probability sampling or random sampling, purposeful sampling was used to select the participants (see Creswell, 1998; Eisenhardt, 2002; Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 2001). Their biographical information is presented in Table 6.1, in which pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants.

6.2.3 Data collection and analysis

Primary data were collected through multiple sessions of individual in-depth interviews. Each in-depth interview had a semi-structured format and was conducted in Japanese. All interview sessions were recorded using an Integrated Circuit (IC) recorder. Recorded data were then transcribed for later data analysis. The data analysis was conducted following GTA procedures (see Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). Prior to the implementation of the present study, there were no hypotheses or theories on which this study could be based due to a lack of research on preservice EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the new language education policy. In other words, there was no *a priori* theory on which any hypothesis could be deductively formulated for testing (Eisenhardt, 2002). Thus, a deductive, hypothesis-testing

Table 6.1 Participants' biographical information

	Sayaka	Yuji	Tomoko	Makoto
Age	28	36	24	23
Gender	Female	Male	Female	Male
Employment Status	Inservice (temporary teacher)	Inservice (full-time teacher)	Preservice (graduate student)	Preservice (graduate student)
Education	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree, Master's degree (in progress)	Bachelor's degree, Master's degree (in progress)
Teaching Experience	3-week teaching practicum at a junior high school, 5 years at a public senior high school	2-week teaching practicum, 13 years at public senior high schools	3-week teaching practicum at a junior high school	2-week teaching practicum at a senior high school, 1 year as a private tutor
Studying/Traveling Abroad Experience	None	None	None	Enrolled in an English as a Second Language program in Canada for 1 month
Teacher Employment Exam	Not yet passed	Passed	Passed	Not yet passed

Source: Primary data collected by the author.

research design was speculated to be inappropriate. Accordingly, the present study aimed at “theory building.”

The researcher of this study made an attempt to construct a grounded theory consisting of essentially conceptual categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 12) describe the rationale as follows: “[t]heory derived from data is more likely to resemble the ‘reality’ than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation (how one thinks things ought to work).” Suddaby (2006, p. 634) adds that it is appropriate to use GTA when the researcher wants “to make knowledge claims about how individuals [social actors] interpret reality.” Therefore, the study focused on the interpretive process of the collected data by analyzing “the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings” (Gephart, 2004, p. 457).

All transcribed interview data were segmented in consideration of every utterance’s meaning and subtle nuances (translation from Japanese to English was carried out in this stage). Open coding was then performed. Open coding is the part of data analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing, and describing phenomena found in the transcribed interview data. Open coding is usually done based on identified features of the phenomena under investigation (the properties and dimensions of all segmented data) (see Table A6.1). Referring to the identified properties and dimensions of the data, axial coding was performed to verify the relationships/connections among the categorized data (i.e. sub-categories and core categories). After the axial coding, selective coding was carried out. In the process of selective coding, core categories were selected, identified, and systematically related to other categories. During this stage, the relationships among targeted phenomena (which included sub-categories and core categories connected by common properties and dimensions) were verified and validated to construct a theory.

During the data coding, a concept map (category diagram) was developed (see Figure A6.1). The concept map underwent several revisions, mainly due to some modifications of labels and categories. The researcher’s interpretations of the obtained data were checked for accuracy by consulting the participants throughout the term of the investigation (member checking). Finally, story lines were developed taking into consideration the three aspects of the analyzed data, namely condition, action/interaction, and consequence. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), these three aspects collectively constitute a “paradigm” (the paradigm model).

6.2.4 Research questions

Prior to the investigation, the following three research questions were formulated:

- (a) How do participants perceive the development process of the new language education policy of conducting EFL classes in English at Japanese senior high schools?
- (b) How do participants perceive the implementation of this new policy?
- (c) How do participants perceive school and classroom conditions, particularly in relation to the enactment of the new policy?

6.3 Major research findings

Salient, recurring themes that represent “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 230) are presented in this section. Among multiple meta-themes that emerged in the present study, the following three were chosen: (a) native speakerism; (b) resistance to change; and (c) teachers’ practical knowledge and lack of information-sharing. For each meta-theme, the research findings are described and documented in the form of story lines. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the participants (see Table 6.1). As will be seen, each theme shows the uniqueness of individual participants’ cases: the uniqueness of the participants’ perceptions of the new language education policy, which were deeply rooted in context. Moreover, it is evident that the participants’ perceptions were greatly influenced by socioeducational and political factors.

6.3.1 Native speakerism

When asked how they felt about the development of the new language education policy, Sayaka, Yuji, Tomoko, and Makoto all expressed various levels of pressure as well as anxiety regarding their teaching practices. One of the themes that emerged in the participants’ data was their perception of the position of non-native English teachers. It was evident that they had started to regard their position as disadvantageous and inferior to that of native English speakers in conducting all classes in English. Sayaka, for instance, mentioned as follows:

There are many weaknesses that I can find in being a non-native speaker [of English]. The level of my speaking proficiency is not high enough. If MEXT can allow native English speakers to teach all English classes in [senior high] school, I would appreciate that! If there is a role that a Japanese English teacher can play ... maybe

the role of providing instruction on test-taking techniques for entrance exams. That's all.¹

It was reported that in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages, non-native teachers tend to perceive and identify themselves and native English-speaking teachers more or less in the same fashion (see Gebhard & Nagamine, 2005; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). As Sayaka implied, this tendency might have been intensified by the introduction of the new language education policy. What should be noted here is that Sayaka, Yuji, Tomoko, and Makoto commonly perceived the development of the new policy as a "critical incident" (Farrell, 2008). Critical incidents in professional experience are known to trigger teachers' awareness of professional identities (cf. Sakui & Gaies, 2002; Vavrus, 2002) and prompt them to become more concerned about who they are as persons and teachers than about what they know (knowledge and skills) (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). In addition, the awareness of professional identities determines teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. Accordingly, it is a legitimate action to change the way teachers (both preservice and inservice) are supported in terms of their professional identity formation (Nagamine, 2012).

As the above quote from Sayaka exemplifies, all participants showed a similar tendency to limit their teaching role to a specific area of instruction, such as grammar and entrance-exam preparation. It was also found that Sayaka and Yuji (the inservice teachers) emphasized non-native EFL teachers' superior role in classroom management and disciplining students. By (re-)conceptualizing their role in comparison to that of native English speakers, Sayaka and Yuji possibly tried to maintain their self-esteem and avoid losing face.

When asked what level of English proficiency would be required to teach EFL classes in English, Makoto answered, "Ideally, a native speaker level," without hesitation. He continued as follows:

People may say, 'You're a Japanese teacher! It's definitely OK if your English is not as good as native [English] speakers!' There is no way I would ever accept that idea. So, I think Japanese English teachers must improve their English skills ... I don't think it's possible to become like a native [English] speaker. No matter how hard I study ... If there are native [English] speakers who have learned very well about English education in Japan, we [referring to a prefectural board of education] should employ them as senior high school English teachers. I think it's the best [idea].

Tomoko commented on the same issue, alluding to her belief that MEXT has the ultimate intention of laying off Japanese senior high school English teachers whose English proficiency is not up to the level of native English-speaking teachers.

Any educational change thus necessitates that teachers change because an individual teacher is “the acting subject of change” (Carson, 2005, p. 6). Such transformative change implicates teachers’ professional identity formation (Carson, 2005). The observed perceptual characteristics (particularly, perceiving and identifying non-native speaker teachers’ position in a specific manner) indicate that teachers’ self-images, as well as their self-esteem, might be at stake due to the new policy implementation.

6.3.2 Resistance to change

Sayaka and Yuji, in particular, expressed a strong feeling of dislike toward MEXT and the new language education policy. Yuji, for example, stated that MEXT does not fully understand local school situations and the variety of problems that inservice teachers face on a daily basis (e.g. parents’ and students’ expectations and needs, class size, dealing with students’ different levels, lack of cooperation with junior high school teachers) and that the realities as perceived by inservice teachers are not taken into consideration in the process of policy making. All participants implied that they felt a sense of distance from MEXT, especially when they learned about the new language education policy. Yuji criticized MEXT for starting a teacher-certificate renewal system in 2009:

The Democratic Party [of Japan] promised the abolishment [of the teacher-certificate renewal] system. But, it never happened. I trusted politicians then ... Our burden has already increased since then [April 2009]. And, now we have the new policy.

The coalition government of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito Party decided to start the teacher-certificate renewal system. The government then experienced a governmental change in 2009, when the Democratic Party began a new administration. As Yuji asserted, the Democratic Party publicly announced prior to its administration that the teacher-certificate renewal system would be abolished, and that alternative measures would be undertaken to ensure preservice and inservice teacher quality (*shishitsu*). The aforementioned remark by Yuji implies that teachers’ expectations of the government were

effectively violated and that they may have been demotivated to seek positive changes in the field of education.

Sayaka, Tomoko, and Makoto argued that teaching all EFL classes in English would only be effective in helping students to improve their listening skills, and that the policy implementation would likely lower the quality of English education. Such negative attitudes toward the policy implementation were possibly born out of teachers' negative feelings (i.e. disappointment and frustration) about the discrepancy between what was pledged and what was done by the politicians.

Furthermore, Tomoko stated:

I didn't tell you this last time [in the previous interview session]. I took a teacher employment exam this year, and I passed it ... My dream was to become a senior high school [English] teacher. I think I told you that. But, I took an exam for [prospective] junior high school [English] teachers ... That's right! I gave up!

Even though Tomoko's initial intention was to become a senior high school English teacher, she changed her mind because of the new policy: "I couldn't imagine myself using English fluently to teach [English] classes, so I intentionally avoided aiming for a senior high school position." Yet another type of resistance was observed. Sayaka, for instance, reported that she made a firm decision to continue using Japanese in her EFL classes. Sayaka also confessed that she had never even thought about using English to teach EFL classes, and that the percentage of time spent using her spoken English in class was "probably close to zero."

6.3.3 Teachers' practical knowledge and lack of information-sharing

Sayaka, Yuji, Tomoko, and Makoto demonstrated, though in different ways, their perception of the necessity to change their pedagogical approaches and teaching practices in senior high school settings. What they did not demonstrate was a consistent explanation of MEXT's expectations for change. The need to incorporate communicative activities into EFL classes is clearly mentioned in the recent versions of *The Course of Study*, and the necessity to enrich the quality of communicative activities is similarly articulated in the latest version. Moreover, it is clear that MEXT is trying to generate a shift from traditional approaches (e.g. the teacher-centered, textbook-based grammar translation method) to student-centered, communicative approaches (cf. Stewart, 2009). As Nishino (2012) argues, this attempt appears to conflict with

teachers' familiar teaching practices and beliefs about English learning and teaching. Tomoko mentioned as follows:

It's just extremely difficult [for me] to plan a lesson in which I use English to teach ... Perhaps, I'm thinking that ... I will need to apply the grammar translation method at the same time as using English to explain ... grammatical structures. Vocabulary. Correct translation. Perhaps, because I'm thinking this way, I can't imagine myself conducting English classes in English. I can't stop thinking ... if I were a student, I wouldn't want to be taught in English. I wouldn't be able to understand what the teacher was saying. I wouldn't feel comfortable.

Struggling to find possible explanations for MEXT's expectations for change, Tomoko frequently referred to her previous in-class learning experiences. In her junior and senior high school days, the teacher-centered, textbook-based grammar translation method was primarily used to teach English subjects: "We were often asked to read aloud English texts in both [junior high and senior high] schools. But, there were very few communicative activities in senior high school." The grammar translation method was therefore the most familiar teaching approach for her. In other words, her "practical knowledge" (Golombek, 1998) of English teaching was formed when she was a junior and senior high school student, and it still affected the way that she, as a preservice teacher, thought about the possible approaches for teaching EFL classes in English. Similar phenomena were also observed in the other participants' data. Lortie (1975) argues that prior learning experiences in schooling play a crucial role in determining teaching beliefs and practices, and that teaching beliefs are formed on the basis of one's prior learning experience as a student rather than as a teacher (i.e. the apprenticeship of observation).

What appeared to be another crucial factor affecting the participants' perceptions was the lack of authentic experiences of being taught in English (see Table 6.1). It was hence speculated that gaining authentic experiences of being taught in English would positively affect teachers' attitudes and motivation toward using English as the medium of instruction in EFL classes. Makoto, however, pointed out the meaninglessness of such speculation. He had a study abroad experience with an English as a Second Language (ESL) program in Canada, stating that "Of course, classes were taught in English there." Makoto continued:

Every lesson included many types of communicative activities. I really enjoyed interacting with my classmates and instructors through these

activities. I couldn't understand everything, though. If you ask me to teach the same way as those instructors did, I don't think I can do it ... First of all, I don't remember how they explained grammatical points ... The environment [indicating the distinction between ESL and EFL contexts] is different. We don't need to use English to live here [in Japan]. I think that ... the need to use English must be created.

Tomoko suggested that MEXT should make English an elective subject, and that "only students who are really motivated to learn English as a communication tool" should take EFL classes in senior high school. By doing this, MEXT may be able to support students who are interested in learning a different foreign language(s), while students who are highly motivated to learn English may be grouped and taught together in EFL classes. Sayaka implied that there were few opportunities for teachers to share information regarding class preparation procedures and instructional ideas to make English teaching effective. She also expressed the idea that there might be a "Japanese way" of teaching English that values the development of "linguistic sensibilities" and language awareness; hence it was not surprising when she said that she had decided to continue using Japanese as the medium of instruction in her EFL classes. Sayaka further mentioned that MEXT had sent a DVD to every senior high school so that inservice teachers could watch and learn from successful teaching practices with the use of English. However, detailed descriptions of class preparation procedures were not recorded on the DVD. Accordingly, context-sensitive, locally appropriate approaches may be called for; however, preservice as well as inservice teachers are not given ample opportunities to share information (particularly, information regarding instructional processes), transform practical knowledge, and develop as professionals in a cooperative or collaborative fashion.

6.4 Implications

Based on the research findings, the following implications can be proposed for policy makers, administrators, and teacher educators to develop and implement language education policy successfully in Asian EFL contexts in general and Japanese EFL contexts in particular:

- (a) Policy makers, in collaboration with administrators, should reconsider students' right to choose a foreign language(s) to learn in school.
- (b) Policy makers and administrators should conduct needs analyses of foreign language(s) in local school settings to clarify parents and students' needs.

- (c) Policy makers should present opportunities for students, parents, teachers, administrators, and teacher educators to be involved in meaningful, constructive dialogue in the process of policy making.
- (d) Teacher educators, possibly in collaboration with administrators, should provide ample opportunities for teachers (both preservice and inservice) to experience awareness-raising, reflection-type activities so that teachers can share process-oriented information and transform their practical knowledge and teaching beliefs.
- (e) Teachers (both preservice and inservice) should explore and negotiate descriptive ways of teaching (as opposed to prescriptive ways of teaching) that are context sensitive and locally appropriate.

Collaboration and/or cooperation among policy makers, administrators, and teacher educators is vital to ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of any language education policy (Mahboob & Tilakaratna, 2012). All critical stakeholders need to become involved in discourse or discursive practices so that the process of policy making, as well as the implementation of policy, can be a collaborative/cooperative endeavor. Hence, policy making and implementation should be an inclusive, multi-stakeholder process. In addition, considering that *de facto* foreign language education is “English education” in Japan, it cannot be denied that students’ right to select and study a foreign language(s) of their choice in school settings has been prejudiced. This problem should be solved (or at least, it should be politicized) as soon as possible in order for Japan to develop as a multilingual and multicultural society. It is hence suggested that policy makers, in collaboration with administrators (such as officers of prefectural boards of education), conduct needs analyses to investigate students’ and parents’ needs regarding foreign language learning at the local-school level. It is imperative and urgent for the government to create a system that reflects the outcomes of needs analyses in policy making and implementation.

In spite of the enactment of the new language education policy, senior high school teachers (both preservice and inservice teachers) may continue teaching EFL classes in exactly the same way as they were taught themselves, that is, using Japanese (i.e. through a teacher-centered, textbook-based grammar translation method) (cf. Pan & Block, 2011). By providing inservice and preservice training in which teachers can fully explore and effectively transform their practical knowledge and teaching beliefs, teacher educators and administrators can play an important role in the implementation of the new policy. The action of teacher educators and administrators may thus become a determining factor in the successful enactment of the policy.

In addition, as is evident in the present study, teachers will most likely end up as the main barrier to educational change unless they are given sufficient opportunities to explore and negotiate descriptive ways of teaching (i.e. context-sensitive, locally appropriate teaching approaches). Moreover, as this study implies, there is a tendency that teachers “often believe that they have little power to effect policy and do not view themselves as implementers of macro-level policies” (Mahboob & Tilakaratna, 2012, p. 8). Therefore, it seems urgent to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to take part in political dialogue and discourse pertaining to education. More specifically, teachers need to acquire astute analytical skills to scrutinize the macro-structures of their educational, political context (Johnson, 2009). Teachers also need to acquire political tactics to engage in discursive practices so as to negotiate and change realities (see Shin, 2012).

6.5 Conclusion

The new language education policy, which has been enacted by MEXT in 2013, mandates that senior high school EFL teachers conduct all their classes in English. This new policy has generated repercussions among preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and teacher educators. There is no doubt that it adds to the pressure on both preservice and inservice teachers. The level of associated anxiety and pressure may vary among teachers due to differing school settings, employment status, teaching beliefs, and/or the way that they perceive realities. Likewise, how teachers react to the new policy implementation may also vary. Contextuality (Packer & Winne, 1995) of realities and issues is uniquely recognized and perceived by individual teachers.

Furthermore, the new policy certainly requires teachers to change their beliefs regarding English learning and teaching, as well as their pedagogical approaches and teaching practices. While the voices of policy makers and academics can be heard, the voices of teachers are rarely heard, and a dialogue in which teachers can engage with each other is especially lacking. This lack of dialogue is detrimental because it is local teachers, not policy makers, who have direct access to students and translate a top-down imposed policy into practice. This chapter hence presented an argument in support of the possibility of recognizing local teachers’ roles and voices as an integral part of government policy making (cf. Farrell & Kun, 2007).

The limitation of the present study may be attributed to the low number of participants (i.e. four cases). All participants were Japanese teachers in an EFL setting. Furthermore, although the research methodology (particularly, the employment of GTA and member checking) might have minimized this possibility, it is likely that the researcher’s

role (interviewer) affected the objectivity of the data analysis and interpretations. Therefore, even though it was not a primary goal of this study, generalizability may be called into question. It should be stressed, however, that particularization, as opposed to generalization, was the research goal. A remark by Davis (1995, p. 441) is relevant here: “[o]ne of the common criticisms of qualitative studies is that they are not generalizable. On the one hand, a strength of qualitative studies is that they allow for an understanding of what is specific to a particular group, that is, what cannot possibly be generalized within and across populations.” In this regard, the particularization of the studied cases should be taken as a strength.

Appendices

Table A6.1 Coding sample of Yuji

Segmented data	Property	Dimension	Label
I don't think MEXT fully understands what's really going on in schools.	Time	Present	MEXT's understanding of local school settings
	Denial	Complete	
	Object of denial	MEXT's understanding	
	Object of understanding	Local school situations	
	Statement type	Criticism	
If MEXT had closely worked together with inservice teachers to develop the language education policy, the policy would have been totally different.	Feeling/emotion	Negative	Involvement of inservice teachers in policy making
	Mood	Subjunctive	
	Object of postulation	MEXT's close, collaborative work with inservice teachers	
	Goal of work	Development of the language education policy	
	Result of postulation	Differences in the policy	
MEXT staff don't have any understanding of the problems that inservice teachers face on a daily basis. It's sad ...	Degree of difference	Great (“totally”)	MEXT's understanding of inservice teachers' problems
	Time	Present	
	Denial	Complete	
	Object of denial	MEXT staff's understanding	
	Object of understanding	Inservice teachers' problems	
	Description of problem	Unspecified	
	Occurrence of problem	Daily	
	Statement type	Criticism	
	Feeling/emotion	Sadness (“Sad”)	

Source: Primary data collected by the author.

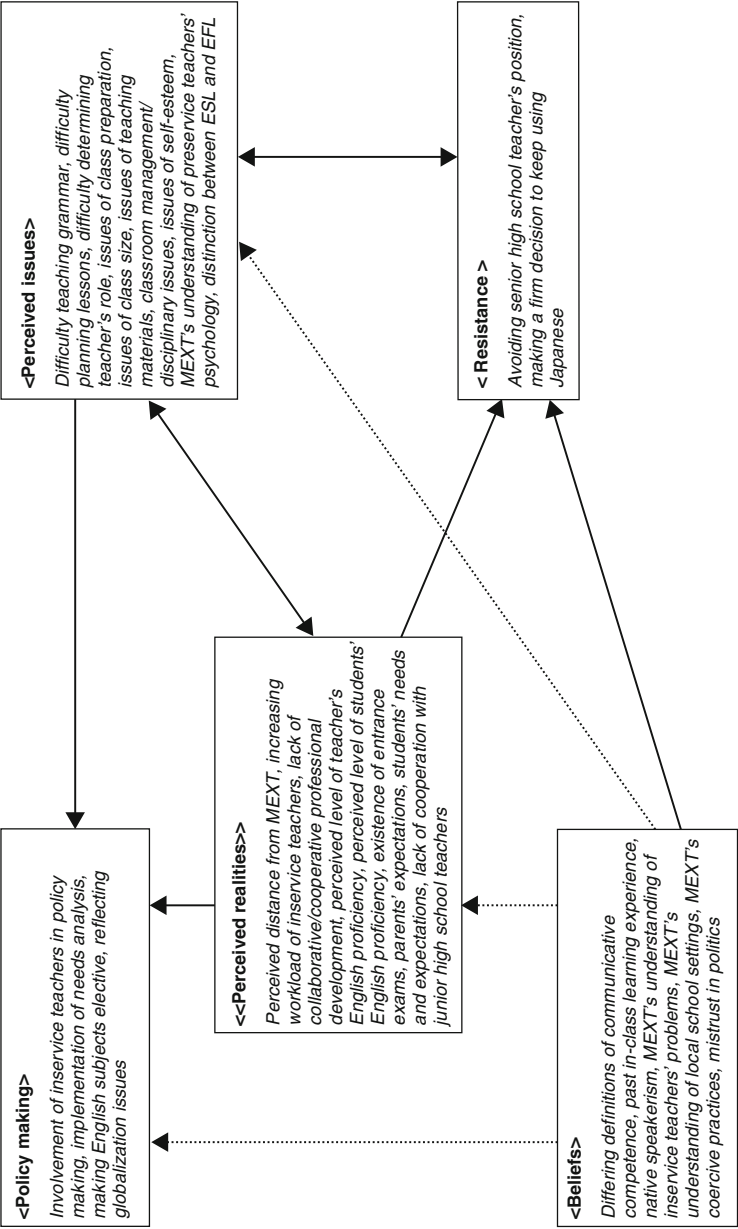


Figure A6.1 Sample concept map (subset)
Notes: <<>> = Core category, < > = Sub-category, *Italics* = Label.
...> = Relation speculated based on data analysis.
Source: Primary data collected by the author.

Note

1. “[]” signifies information added by the researcher; “...” denotes places where part of the interview data is omitted.

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